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AN  
ESSAY UPON  
THE CALIPHATE

BY  
JOHN DAVENPORT.

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KALI PRASANNA SEN GUPTA.

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## PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR.

THE present has been penned at the suggestion of numerous readers of "An apology for Mohammed and the Koran," who were of opinion that a concise notice of the Caliphate would be a desirable supplement to that work.

J. D.



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## THE PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

IN offering the accompanying volume for the patronage of the Mahomedan community of India, the Publisher begs leave to state that the work is published at the request of Moulvi Fuzl Rubee, Dewan to H. H. the Nawab Nazim of Moorshidabad, who obtained the copyright from the author actuated by his well-known pious zeal for diffusing amongst his coreligionists a knowledge of the sacred works of Islam. The Publisher hopes that all true followers of the Prophet would come forward and accord to him that support which the importance of the undertaking demands and thus enable him to bring out other sacred works which are equally invaluable, but unfortunately almost unprocureable at the present time.

CALCUTTA. }  
5th August, 1884. } KALI PROSANNA SEN GUPTA



AN  
ESSAY UPON THE PERFECT  
OR  
UNDIVIDED CALIPHATE.\*

THE mischiefs that flow from the contests of ambition are usually confined to the times and country in which they have occurred ; not so, such as result from religious dissensions or from that most implacable of all hatreds, the *odium theologicum*. To the truth of this fact, the history of the Caliphate bears the most indisputable evidence, inasmuch as the bitter animosity that arose upon the death of Mohammed, between the two great sects known as the Sonnites and the Shiites, has not only been renewed in every age of the Hejira, but still continues, although in some degree, mitigated, between the Persians and the Ottomans.

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\* By the *perfect* or *undivided* Caliphate is to be understood that in which the regal and sacerdotal offices were united in one and the same individual.

Had the friends and companions of Mohammed felt the spirit of animosity and rivalry which influenced the successors of Alexander the Great, their empire would never have reached from the Atlantic to the Ganges, while their religion might have disappeared amid the deserts of Arabia, but a portion of their master's enthusiasm was vouchsafed by Allah to descend upon and animate his disciples, and a zeal for the propagation of the Koran exalted them above every thought and view of mere personal interest ; but after Mohammed's death, neither the terrors of the sword nor the fulminations from the pulpit, could establish and keep alive that unanimity of religious sentiment so ardently desired by the Prophet, but, on the contrary, the sects of Islamism are, most unfortunately, as numerous as those which are the opprobrium of Christianity itself, both religions presenting, equally, in this respect, a melancholy instance of the weakness of man's intellect and the pride of the human heart.

A detail of the history and of the conflicting systems of so many sects might be extended through volumes, but, since in considering the Jews and the Christians, at large, the former are

regarded under the two general denominations of *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, and the latter under those of *Catholics* and *Protestants*, so, with equal propriety, a general view may be taken of the *Sonnites* or *Traditionists*, and the *Shiites* or *Sectarians*. Now, the consequence of this separation was not only a great variety of opinions and rites,\* but, also, a most implacable and, it would appear, the deadliest of feuds.

Of these two factions, the one, namely the *Sonnites* acknowledged Abubeker, the Prophet's father-in-law, as his successor, while the other adhered to Ali, the cousin-german and son-in-law of Mohammed, and this, with the greater justice and zeal, seeing that Mohammed had always evinced a strong and marked affection for him, and had, even, on several occasions, declared him his successor, but more particularly upon two, the one being at the banquet given by the Prophet, at his own house, to the tribe of Hashem, when, upon Ali, in de-

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\* Thus, in contradistinction to the *Sonnites* who, in their prayers, cross their hands upon the lower part of the breast, the *Shiites* or *Shiyates* drop their arms in straight lines. •

fiance alike of ridicule and contempt, declaring himself a convert to the true faith, Mohammed threw his arms around the generous youth and pressing him to his breast, exclaimed, "Behold my brother, my *wasi* (legatee, mandatory, executor of a man's will, heir), my caliph! The other occasion was that, when only one year before his death, Mohammed preached a sermon to his followers, in obedience to the command of God conveyed to him by the angel Gabriel, in the following words: "Unto thee, O prophet, do I bring the peace and blessing of Allah, together with His command to thy followers and which thou art to make known unto them without delay, or fear of unrighteous men, for the Lord is mighty and will protect thee, His servant."

In obedience to this command, Mohammed directed Asan to convoke an assembly of the Prophet's followers, as well as of Jews and Christians and of sundry native tribes and races. The place of meeting was at a village called Khum Ghadir, a suburb of the city of Hajfa, situate between Mecca and Medina. The ground having been previously cleared of all obstructions, Mohammed, on the 10th of April A. D. 631

ascended a very lofty pulpit which had been erected for him, and delivered, amid the deepest silence and the profoundest attention of the many thousands of listeners, a discourse characterized by all the graces of impassioned eloquence, but of which, we regret, our limits will not allow us to give more than the summary following: "All praise and glory," thus began the Prophet, "are due to the one sole and indivisible God. His knowledge extendeth over the past, the present and the future and unto Him are known the innermost secrets of men's hearts, for from Him can naught be hidden. Though inconceivably remote from Him, yet is He ever nigh unto us. It is He who hath created the heavens and the earth and whatsoever that is therein contained. He is the only imperishable one and unto His might and power are subjected all that exist, but unto all does He vouchsafe His grace and mercy. Wisdom is there in all that proceedeth from Him. He is slow to punish and ever tempered with mercy are His chastisements. The mystery of His nature is and ever will remain inscrutable to mortals. Obedient to His will do the sun, the moon and the rest of the heavenly host per-



form the course assigned unto them. Whatsoever He desireth, the same shall, of a surety, come to pass, whether it be in heaven or on earth. From the living can He take away life, and unto the dead can He restore it. He dispenses, alike, joy and sorrow. His ear will He incline unto the prayer of all such as firmly believe in Him and serve Him with a pure and contrite heart.—As for me, O people, I am but a bondsman bound to execute His will, unto which I bow with awe and reverence.✕Thrice hath the angel Gabriel appeared unto me, and thrice hath he commanded me to declare unto all my followers, be they white or be they black that *Ali is my Caliph, Wasi and Immdm* (deputy, teacher, head, chief), that he is my very flesh and blood, that he is to me what Aaron was to Moses and that he shall be your guide after my death, that my followers are to obey him when I am departed hence, as they did me while yet among them. They who shall disobey Ali shall disobey God and His prophet. Such, O friends, are the commands of Allah.—Ali hath been instructed by me in all the revelations I have received from time to time. No *Toba* (repentance) shall avail him

who fulfils not this command. The perpetual curse of Allah shall assuredly rest upon the head of him who obeys not the command of Ali. In every chapter of the Koran hath God commended Ali. Ali, I repeat, is my uncle's son, my flesh and blood, and endowed with the rarest virtues. After Ali, his sons, Hasam and Hossein and their children's children are to succeed."

The discourse being concluded, Abubeker, Omar, Othman, Saffran and others kissed Ali's hands and congratulated him upon being thus nominated Mohammed's successor and promised that they would faithfully obey all his behests.

In A. D. 632, only three days before his death, the Prophet again exhorted his followers, in these words in a parting address. "Do you, O my disciples, verily believe that there is but one God; that I, Mohammed, am his prophet; that there are, indeed a Paradise and a Hell; that death and after it the resurrection are certain; and that there is an appointed time when all mankind, rising from out their graves, shall stand before the judgment seat of the Almighty?" The whole assembly answered unanimously, "Yea, verily we do believe all,

these things." Upon which the Prophet solemnly adjured them by these dogmas of their faith ever to hold his family, but more especially in their love and reverence. "Whosoever loves me," said Mohammed emphatically, "let him regard Ali as his friend. May Allah uphold those who befriend him and frown on all who are his enemies !"

Such repeated and explicit declarations from the Prophet's own lips, removed for a time, all doubts, as to the succession ; but, ultimately, the public were disappointed, ~~for~~ for Ayesha, Abubeker's daughter and Mohammed's second wife, succeeded, through her influence and intrigues, in obtaining the election of her father as the first Caliph.

The circumstance, too, of Mohammed's removal into Ayesha's apartments, there to await the visitation of the angel of death was, whether in consequence of the Prophet's express desire, or by his wife's persuasion, particularly favorable to her schemes, since it is all but certain that, having once got the moribund in her lair, she would take every precaution to prevent any expression of his, in favour of Ali's succession, from reaching the public ear.

The Prophet, therefore, was generally supposed to have died without making known his last will as to his successor, and hence it was that three successive Caliphs reigned ere Ali could obtain those rights to which he was so justly entitled, not only by his birth and his union with Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, but also by the innumerable and important services he had rendered to Islamism.

Filial duty, it is to be hoped might have been one of the motives of Ayesha's proceedings, but the strongest of them was, most undoubtedly, an inextinguishable and rancorous hatred for Ali, the cause of which is affirmed to have been as follows · Mohammed having in the first year of the Hejira, undertaken an expedition against the Mostabek tribe could not separate himself from his beloved Ayesha, who, in consequence accompanied him. Upon their return and when they were not far from Medina the army removing by night, Ayesha alighted on the road from her camel, and stepped aside on a private occasion, but on her return, perceiving she had dropped her necklace, a very valuable one being formed of onyxes from Dharfar, she retraced her steps to look for it and, in the

meantime, her attendants, taking it for granted she must have re-entered her *palanquin* (a tent curtained all round, wherein women are carried in the East) set it again on the camel and led it away. Upon Ayesha's coming back to the road and finding her camel gone she sat down there expecting that upon her being missed some one would be sent back to fetch her and shortly afterwards fell asleep. Early in the morning Safwân Ibn-al-Moatteb who had staid behind to rest himself coming by and perceiving some one asleep on the ground approached to see who it was and recognising the slumberer as Ayesha, immediately awoke her by twice repeating in a low tone "We are God's creatures and unto Him shall we return." Ayesha, upon being thus awakened instantly covered herself with her veil and Safwân setting her upon his own camel, led her away after the army which they overtook by noon, it having then halted in order to take rest.

A young and beautiful female thus in the hands of a youthful and gallant warrior in the midst of a vast desert was quite sufficient to excite the suspicions of the Arabs. Scandalous suggestions and insinuations being first

propagated by Abdallah Ebn Obbu who, at the same time failed not to exaggerate, to the utmost, the circumstance, out of hatred to Mohammed who, on his part, not knowing what to think of the matter was induced by the advice of Ali to institute a "delicate enquiry," in consequence whereof, Ayesha was put upon her defence before Abubeker and Omm Rauman by whom after a strict investigation she was declared to be perfectly innocent. In consequence of this verdict, three of the propagators of the scandal were punished with fourscore stripes each, pursuant to the law in the 24th Chapter of the Koran, but Abdoollah the originator of the calumny, being a man of considerable influence was allowed to escape with impunity. Ali's suggestion that Ayesha should be put upon her trial was never forgotten or forgiven by her, and she always afterwards persecuted him with a vindictiveness equalled only by that with which the *Jovis et soror et conjux* pursued the magnanimous hero of Virgil's *Æneid*.

According to another account of Abubeker's elevation to the Caliphate it appears that upon authentic intelligence of the Prophet's decease

reaching his relatives and friends, each of the two cities of Mecca and Medina advocated, with considerable eloquence and force of argument, its claim to nominate the Prophet's successor, but that Abubeker approving a suggestion made by an inhabitant of the former city, namely that the power should be vested in two Caliphs, declared that Omar and Abu Obbeidah would prove worthy and efficient representatives of their deceased master ; but Omar alleging his incompetency for so weighty and responsible an office, proposed that Abubeker himself should be chosen to direct the energies of the faithful, a proposition which was unanimously acceded to.

/ Ali was not present at this election, and upon hearing of it, was sorely disappointed and indignant, having very naturally and reasonably expected that the choice would have fallen upon himself. Meanwhile, Abubeker lost no time in sending Omar to Fatima's residence, at which were Ali and some of his friends, with orders to invite them to come in and do fealty to the Caliph, but that, should they refuse so to do, he was to compel them by force. Conformably to these instructions Omar surrounded the

house with his myrmidons, and after giving Ali, official notice of Abubeker's election, declared, with threatening voice and gesture that, in consequence of his (Omar's) advice and motion it had been unanimously resolved in council that if any one should dare to take upon himself the sovereign power, such person together with all those who abetted and supported him should incur the penalty of death. Thus having said, Omar next declared that unless his orders were obeyed, he would enforce the penalty by immediately setting fire to the house and thus consuming it and its inmates. "O son of Khuttab !" cried Fatima in tones at once reproachful and frantic, "surely thou wouldst not perpetrate so wicked and barbarous an outrage" "Most assuredly, would I," replied Omar, "if all of you refuse to adhere to the popular choice." Under these circumstances the sole alternative left to Ali and his friends was to obey the peremptory summons.

So decisive or, rather, so violent a procedure, on the part of Omar was doubtless prompted by the consideration that as Abubeker was now stricken in years, he being about the same age as was the Prophet when he died, he was not



likely to survive him long, and he, therefore, hoped that with due management he might succeed him in the Caliphate, provided he could exclude Ali, the only competitor he had any reason to fear.

Upon assuming his high office and dignity, Abubeker, despising all royal titles, simply styled himself—*Resul Allah* (representative or deputy of the Prophet). Finding that the Arabs were disposed to relapse into idolatry, now that Mohammed was no more, the Caliph appealed to their pride and self-esteem by saying to them, "O you, men of Mecca, will you shew the world that you were the last to embrace and the first to abandon the religion of Islam?" The appeal was successful. Khaled\* declared himself the enemy of all apostates and, at the head of a chosen band of fiery enthusiasts, defeated the scattered tribes of the desert and brought them back to their

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\* The Greek governor of Muta, a town situated south of the Red Sea, having slain one of Mohammed's ambassadors when on his way to Bozrah, the Prophet dispatched an army against him and a decisive victory, having been gained owing to Khaled's judicious measures Mohammed rewarded him with the title of "the sword of God."

belief in the only one God, and to their confidence in Mohammed as His prophet.

A powerful enemy next appeared in the province of Nedsjed. This was the impostor Moseilama\* who upon the Prophet's death raised the standard of revolt, but Khaled, although worsted in the first battle with the rebels, utterly defeated them in a second one, in which Moseilama fell, mortally wounded by a javelin (A. D 636).

Then followed, in the same year, the invasion of Syria, the capture of Bozrah by Khaled, and the fall of Damascus, the tidings of which reached the Caliph when on his death-bed. In his last moments, Abubeker, with the consent of the people, nominated Omar for his successor, but who, from diffidence, wished to decline the

\* This man had the insolence to make the following proposal to Mohammed

"From Moseilama, the Apostle of God to Mohammed, the Apostle of God—Now let the earth be half thine and half mine"

Mohammed replied—"From Mohammed the Apostle of God, to Moseilama the liar.—The earth is God's. He giveth the same for inheritance to such as pleaseth Him and a happy issue shall attend all who fear him."

proffered honour, but at length consented, upon Abubeker saying to him—"Though you may have no need of the Caliphate, yet hath the Caliphate need of you."

But, by far, the most important event which signalized Abubeker's reign, was one connected with religion, namely, the collecting and editing the *Sonna* inasmuch as that work proved, ultimately, to be the cause, the very *fons et origo* of that fatal and, therefore, ever to be deplored schism which, during thirty years of unexampled military renown and conquest was silently sapping the foundations of Mohammedan power and thus secretly preparing the overthrow of that, once, so mighty an empire. A short account of this most extraordinary work necessitates a short digression.

The *Sonna*, then, purports to be a collection of the Mohammedan traditions and of the sayings and actions of Mohammed, and which all Moslems who call themselves *orthodox* are required and expected to believe. It is a kind of supplement to the Koran inculcating the observance of several things omitted in that book, and, in sense as well as design, corresponding with the Mishna of the Jews. In-

deed, the literal meaning of the word *Sonna* in Arabic is identical with that of *Mishna*, namely the *second* or as the Jews call it, the *oral* Law. The adherents to the *Sonna* are called *Sonnites* or traditionists, and, as among the Jews, there is a sect called *Caraites* who reject the *Mishna*, so among the Mohammedans is a sect, the members of which reject the traditions of the *Sonna*, because founded exclusively upon the authority of an apocryphal book and not derived by them from their ancestors. The *Sonnites* call their opponents by the scurrilous name of *Shiites* or *Shii* a word formed from that of *Shiyah* which properly signifies—a scandalous reprobate or apostate sect. The *Shiites* are called by each other *Adaleyahites*, from the word *Adaleyah* the name they give their sect and which means—the religion of those who follow justice and tread in the right path.

The *Shiites* reproach the *Sonnites* with giving to the mere dreams of their divines the same authority as they recognize in the *Koran* itself ; and, it appears to us, that in making this objection they are fully justified, as, much is founded upon mere hearsay and tradition, and, con-

sequently, must be classed with the Apocrypha of the Christian Scriptures.

If what many eminent controversialists assert, be true, namely, that the four Christian Gospels themselves, so far from having been written by the saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are nothing but mere traditions and that those names were assigned them, the better to insure them the belief and authority they would otherwise want, they might, not improbably, have suggested to the Mohammedans, the idea of the Sonna itself.

Now, in order to enable our readers to form a correct idea of what a *tradition* actually is, and how far it is entitled to challenge belief, we shall give them the following translation of the Epistle so well known to all biblical scholars which Pope Leo I., surnamed the Great, sent to Flavianus, upon the subject of the "Incarnation." John Moachus informs us in his "*Spiritual Meadow*" that he was *told* by Abbot Menas who was *told* by Abbot Eulogins who was *told* by Archdeacon Gregory that the Roman Church had a written tradition that Pope Leo the Great when he had finished this letter laid it on the tomb of the Apostle

Peter and besought him to correct it wherever it was erroneous and imperfect. After the Pope had prayed, fasted and lain on the ground for about forty days, Peter appeared to him and said, "I have read and corrected," upon which Leo takes this letter from off the tomb and finds that the Apostle had been as good as his word. So much for tradition !

The Sonna is composed of six collections of traditions held in particular esteem by the Sonnites or orthodox traditionists. The one formed by Abdoollah Mohammed of Bokhara is particularly famous. Two hundred years after the Prophet's death, this sage of the Law selected seven thousand, two hundred and seventy five genuine traditions from about one hundred thousand of a doubtful, and two hundred thousand of a spurious character. These traditions were made by the early converts to Islamism and relate to the actions and sayings and even the silence of Mohammed, whose taciturnity was full of eloquence, so much so, indeed, that most important inferences have been drawn therefrom. This work was composed at Mecca. Each day the laborious and pious author prayed near the gate of

Abraham and performed his ablutions with water from the well of Zem-Zem. Absorbed in veneration for the Prophet, he took his book to Medina, digested it into chapters and placed them both on the sepulchre and pulpit of Mohammed, and in the moderate time of sixteen years, his book was finished. His collection is entitled the *Sahih* (the genuine); it has been received by the four orthodox sects of the Sonnites and innumerable commentaries on it have been published by the Mohammedan Doctors.\*

The fundamental religious doctrine of the Shiites is the all-sufficiency of the Koran as the revealed word of God.

The high doctrine of the indefeasibility and hereditary right is upheld by the Shiites with unflinching constancy and in consequence of this principle Ali, the fourth Caliph ought to have been the immediate successor of the

\* The names of these Doctors or Divines were Haneefa, Malik Shaffee and Hanbal. They lived in the 1st and 2nd centuries of the Hejra and have been acknowledged as Imâms or High priests and honoured with the appellation of *the four stars of the Sonnite Faith*.

Prophet, and the three Caliphs preceding him, in time, namely Abubeker, Omar and Othman were, therefore, usurpers. The Sonnites, on the contrary, maintain that the nomination of spiritual and political chiefs is a power which resides only in those who are to be governed. Hence the Sonnites may be considered as the *Whigs* and the Shiites as the *Tories* of Islamism. The Persians who are Shiites call Ali the *Vicar of God* and estimate his authority of equal weight with that of Mohammed himself and the Persian Creed therefore, declares that *God is God, Mohammed, the Prophet of God and Ali the Vicar of God.*

The respect, indeed, which the Shiites have for the memory of Ali borders on idolatry, a feeling to which the singular circumstance of his mother having been delivered of him, in the temple of Mecca itself has not a little contributed. Thus, Hussein, one of the last monarchs of the Suffavean dynasty in Persia described himself in his seal as "the vilest of the dogs of Ali." In the present day, all Mussulmans unite in commiserating the misfortunes and calamities which were the lot of Ali and in blaming the violence of which



he was the victim. Every time they pronounce his name, they accompany it with the benediction "May Allah render his face glorious!" The Persians, also have, now, somewhat relaxed their religious prejudices and cease to call those whom they regard as their erring brethren—*Infidels* ; they consider them as believers, because, as they say, "they recognize the holy mission of Mohammed and worship God, but that they have forfeited their claim to be denominated *faithful* by joining with those who refused allegiance and acted with cruelty towards Ali, towards the daughter and towards the other descendants of the holy Prophet." The Sonnites are not equally charitable in their sentiments and bearing towards the Shiites, and but a few only of the ablest Sonnite Doctors have acknowledged the descendants of Ali to be genuine Mohammedans. D'Herbelot however, says that the prayer for cursing the memory of Ali was abolished after the expiration of forty years by the Ominiades themselves while Chardin informs us that, in his time, there were but few among the Turks who presumed to revile Ali as an infidel

It has been said, and, we believe with some

truth, that upon the Mohammedans settling in India, the two-rival sects abated, to a certain extent, their religious animosities; the partisans of Ali ceasing to curse Omar, and the adherents of the three first Caliphs forbearing to ridicule the twelve Imâms.

After this necessary digression we resume our notice upon the four first Caliphs.

Omar on taking possession of his new dignity, assumed the title of Emir-al-Mumeinein (Prince of the faithful) a title retained by all subsequent Caliphs. The strictness or rather severity which so characterized him, was indispensable at a time when unprecedented success, seemed to excuse indulgence in military violence, while his inflexible justice mitigated the calamities of war and conquest, and in proof of this the following curious fact, has been recorded of him. It was his custom to carry a cane with which he chastised officers even of the highest rank whom he detected in the commission of any guilty action and hence originated the proverb "Omar's cane is more terrible than the sword of the bravest warrior." Omar's strictness in enforcing religious ordinances was carried to the very extreme of

fanaticism. In the 18th year after the Prophet's death Omar rendered a most essential and valuable service to his countrymen by introducing the custom of dating all memorable events from the Hejira, thus replacing by one regular and general system of chronology the many separate ones which had hitherto obtained, in consequence of each tribe dating occurrences from some remarkable event which had happened to it, such as a war, a famine, a plague, &c., thus rendering the general chronology a mass of inextricable confusion.

Omar's reign was chiefly distinguished by the siege and capture of Jerusalem and the conquest of Egypt and Persia. On the approach of death, Omar being in doubt whom to nominate as his successor, had recourse to a *singular*, but, certainly, a very effective expedient for preventing all useless delay. He directed that immediately after his death, a council to consist of six commissioners\*

\* These six commissioners were Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed, Othman, another son-in-law of the Prophet, Zobeir and Abdalrhaman, Tatha and Saad, the favourite companions of Mohammed

should be assembled, that three days should be allowed them for deliberation and if, at the end of such time they had not agreed who should be the new Caliph, they were all to be put to death. After a short time, the commissioners elected Othman who was accordingly installed and acknowledged as the third Caliph. During his reign which lasted from A. D. 644 to 656, the Arabian empire grew with extraordinary rapidity extending itself into Persia eastward, and westward, along the northern coast of Africa, as far as Ceuta. The Byzantine empire recovered Egypt for a time but it was again wrested from that power, although at the expense of torrents of blood. Under this reign, the sway of the Saracens extended as far as the Oxus and the confines of India.

Unfortunately for himself, Othman was deficient in that energy and sternness of character for which his predecessor had been so particularly distinguished, a fatal defect since those qualities were indispensably now required in order to arrest the further progress of luxury and licentiousness. Thus his mild and kindly disposition favoured corruption, while the con-

duct of public affairs was intrusted to the hands of unprincipled and designing men, and the old companions were left to complain of being set aside to make room for the Caliph's relatives and private friends. Another circumstance which gave serious offence to the Moslems was Othman's presumption in sitting on the highest seat of the pulpit, while Abubeker and Omar had been content to occupy the first or the second steps only.

The result of all such indiscreet, not to say culpable conduct was that the unlimited obedience of the Moslems to Abubeker and Omar was not continued to Othman, and, at length, prompted the Arabs to shake off their allegiance to him and assembling together in the neighbourhood of Medina, they demanded justice. The Caliph fully complied with their requisitions but the malignancy and ambition of Ayesha, were not so easily appeased. She wished the throne to be filled by one of her own partisans and she, therefore, secretly aided all the machinations of the rebels. A mandate forged in the Caliph's hand-writing, for the murder of the Egyptian lieutenant whom he had been compelled to appoint was placed

within the reach of the Egyptian deputies who had arrived from that country, and the army was no sooner informed by them of this supposed treachery on the part of Othman, than exasperated to the utmost they rushed upon and slew him

Othman fell covered with wounds, while reading the Koran and his life's blood gushed over the sacred volume which is, to this day, preserved as a relic in the Mosque at Damascus.

Othman had left the appointment of his successor to be made by the before mentioned six commissioners and these, excepting Ali himself, proposed that he should assume the government, subject, however, to the condition of his administering it according to the Koran, the traditions and the advice of the two senior members, but the lofty minded Ali indignantly refused to be shackled by this last condition nor would he consent to accept the Caliphate until it was withdrawn. On the same occasion, he also gave a further and striking proof of the magnanimity and independence which so distinguished him, for, upon the Egyptian troops, who were at that time in Medina having offered to secure him the Caliphate Ali,

indignant that such a power should be usurped by foreigners, declared that the suffrages of the citizens only could be available. Ali commenced his reign by dismissing all the Governors of the provinces among whom was Moawiyah, son of that Abu Sofia, who had so long been the bitterest enemy of Mohammed. As might be natural he received Ali's mandate with the fiercest indignation and as he was a near relative of Othman, he resolved to declare himself his avenger, claiming, at the same time, to be his heir and successor. Moawiyah found allies in the interior of Arabia. Syria also declared in his favour, while Ayesha was already in the field, denouncing Ali as the instigator of Othman's assassination. It was from the holy city of Mecca, where she acted as the centre of the faction, that she set forth, at the head of an army under the joint command of Thallah and Zobeir. Bassorah first fell under her power, a success which encouraged her to offer Ali battle. The issue was disastrous for her Thallah and Zobeir were both slain, and Ayesha herself mounted upon a camel (hence this engagement was called *the battle of the camel*) while courageously exhorting her

troops to combat valiantly, fell into the power of the conqueror. The strictest orders had been given to respect her person, but it was also expected that every endeavour would be made to make her a prisoner. Seventy men had their hands cut off in attempting to seize her camel by the bridle; the pavilion or tent in which she was seated was stuck so full of arrows as to resemble a porcupine; at length a soldier having severed the animal's back-sinew, it fell helpless to the ground and Ayesha was forced to surrender. Ali treated his prisoner with the profoundest respect, and thus, although unconsciously, imitated the generous conduct of the Emperor Aurelian to Zenobia, the Queen of Palmyra. He assigned Mohammed's widow forty women as her attendants and caused her to be honorably escorted to Mecca where she died in the 58th year of the Hejira (A.D. 677-8), deserving of the reproach of having sacrificed thousands of lives to her resentment against Ali, as well as to the desire of obtaining in the government the same influence which she exercised in religious affairs. Her memory however, was not the less dear to the followers of the Koran, who, accordingly, have bestowed upon



her, the title of "*the Prophetess*." Tradition gives us another account of her death very different from the above one, for it represents her as having been murdered by order of Moawiyah who was exasperated against her on account of the insulting terms in which she refused to promise allegiance to his son Yezid. Disguising however, his resentment, he invited her to a splendid banquet, having previously caused a deep pit or well to be dug in that part of the apartment prepared for her reception, the mouth of the pit was then covered over with thin lathes concealed by a rich carpet strewn over with leaves and flowers, and an elegant *musnud* or seat of state was placed thereon. No sooner, therefore, did the unfortunate Ayesha seat herself than she was precipitated headlong into the pit beneath which was then filled up with stones and rubbish.

After Ayesha's defeat, Syria next engaged Ali's attention, Moawiyah having there unfurled the standard of rebellion. The hostile forces met on the plain of Suffein or the western bank of the Euphrates not far from the city of Racca. Neither leader was prepared to venture a general action, and the crafty

Moawiyah taking advantage of this state of incertitude, made an appeal to the superstitious feelings of Ali's followers. He ordered some of his men to affix copies of the Koran to the point of their lances, and advancing towards the enemy's lines, to exclaim : " This is the Book that ought to decide the difference between us ; the word of God which expressly forbids the shedding of Moslem blood." The artifice succeeded, for the flower of the Caliph's army threw down their arms, declaring they would not fight against the Book of God, and threatened Ali with the fate of Othman. This dispute was eventually submitted to arbitration and the two persons, by whose award it was to be determined, concurred in deposing Ali. Sentence was pronounced from a lofty tribunal erected in the midst, between the two armies. Abu Musa, one of the arbitrators first pronounced his award, thus : " I depose from the Caliphate both Ali and Moawiyah, in the same manner in which I now take this ring from off my finger." Amru the other arbitrator immediately ascended the tribunal, and said " I concur with Abu Musa in deposing Ali and confer the Caliphate upon Moawiyah, and

I, therefore invest the said prince with the supreme authority, in the selfsame way as I now place this ring upon my finger." Thus, practically, commenced that schism among the Mohammedans which produced the animosity and mutual excommunication visible, even in the present day, in the rooted antipathy that exists between the Turks and the Persians.

Ali and his adherents were, naturally, and with good reason, dissatisfied and indignant at this decision, but they were under the necessity of yielding, and retiring to Cufa, where Ali was, soon after, deserted by the *Kharejites* (rebels, revolters). These people were also called *Mobakkenites* (Judiciarians) from their rejecting Ali on account of his having referred a matter relating to the religion of Allah, to the judgment of men, whereas, in such case, the decision remained to God himself, exclusively. The *Kharejites* not convinced by Ali's reasoning, associated in arms, fixing upon Naharaman, a town about four miles west of the Tigris for their place of rendezvous. Ali marched against them, some he succeeded in persuading to return to their duty, and having slain the rest in battle, once more gained possession of

Arabia ; but meanwhile his rival Moawiyah established himself in Syria and Persia, while Amru seized upon Egypt, in his name. The Syrians also, made an incursion into Ali's territories, committing acts of the greatest cruelty and widely spread depredations.

It was about this time that three of the Cufites happening to meet together at Mecca concurred in lamenting the miseries inflicted upon the people by the cruel war then raging, and resolved to put an end to them by assassinating the chief authors of them—Ali, Moawiyah and Amru. In accordance with this resolution one of the conspirators hastened to Damascus and wounded Moawiyah, but not mortally. Another of the conspirators went into Egypt, and entering a mosque where he had expected to have found Amru, slew another person in his stead. The third assassin, whose name was Abdulrhaman was, unfortunately, more successful, for having arrived at Cufa he immediately hired two others of his own trade to assist him in despatching Ali. Abdulrhaman finding the Caliph at the door of a mosque gave him the first blow, the murder being then completed by his accomplices. The wounded Caliph,

exercising, even when he expected every moment would be his last, that benignity which was so prominent and captivating a feature in his character, enjoined his son Hasam to dispatch his murderer at one blow and thus save him from the horrible tortures he would inevitably be condemned to suffer.\*

Ali pierced, it is said, with a poisoned dagger, expired in the fifth day after being wounded, in the 40th year of the Hejira (A. D. 660) and in, either the 57th, the 58th or the 63rd year of his age, for the date of his birth is uncertain. His sepulchre at Cufa was concealed until the expiration of the caliphate of the Ommiades; but in the year of the Hejira 977 Addad Dowlat caused to be erected over it a superb monument called "The dome of Lights and Graces." This monument which has been beautifully decorated by successive Persian Kings is regarded by Ali's followers as an object of

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\* The generous and humane injunction of Ali was not, however, carried into effect, for immediately after the Caliph's death, the hands and feet of his murderer were cut off, his eyes burnt out with red-hot irons, his tongue torn out from its roots, and his so mutilated body cast into the flames.

the greatest veneration. A city called *Mushed Ali* has likewise been built in honour of him not far from the ruins of Cufa.

On the death of Ali, Hasam, his eldest son, was proclaimed Caliph and Imâm in Irâk ; the former title however, he was forced to resign to Moawiyah, while as to the latter one, that is, the spiritual dignity, his followers regarded it as inalienable. Moawiyah granted him a pension, at the same time, permitting him to retire into private life, unmolested. Nine years after, Hasam died by poison administered to him by his wife Jaadak, at the instigation of Moawiyah, whose death occurred shortly after (A. D. 679), Yezid his son succeeding him. This prince having disgusted not only his own subjects but Moslems in general, by his vices and his violent disposition had not long been proclaimed Caliph at Damascus when a list was secretly transmitted to Hossein at Medina, of one hundred and forty thousand Moslems who were desirous to invest him with that dignity to which he possessed the superior claim of hereditary descent from the Prophet, the said list being also accompanied by a declaration of their eagerness to draw their

swords in his cause as soon as he should appear, in person, on the banks of the Euphrates. Contrary to the most judicious advice, Hossein determined to accept the invitation and traversed the desert with a few friends and a timorous retinue of women and children. As he approached the confines of Irâk, he was alarmed at the solitary or hostile appearance of the country, and suspected therefrom either the defection or the ruin of his party. His fears were unfortunately, but too well founded. The insurrection had been put down and Hossein together with his followers were surrounded, in the plain of Kerheta, by a body of five thousand horse. Hossein might still, however, have escaped to a fortress in the desert, that had formerly defied even the power of the Roman Cæsars and the Persian Chosroes, or confided in the fidelity of the tribe of Tai, which would have armed ten thousand warriors in defence of the grandson of the Prophet ; but instead of adopting either of these alternatives Hossein sought a conference with the general commanding the hostile army, to whom he proposed that he should have the option of one of three honorable conditions namely—that he should be allowed to return to

Medina ; or be stationed in a frontier garrison against the Turks ; or be safely conducted to Yezid's presence. In answer, he was told that he must either submit as a captive and a criminal, to the arms of the Caliph, or await the consequences of his rebellion. "Do you think," replied Hossein, "to terrify me with death ?" And during the space of one short night, allowed him for determining, he prepared with calm and solemn meditation to meet his fate. He checked the lamentations of his sister Fatima who with bitter tears, deplored the impending ruin of his house. "Our trust," said Hossein, "is in God above, all things both in heaven and on earth must perish and return to their Creator ; my father, my brother and sister were better than I, and every Mussulman has an example in the Prophet." He urged his friends to insure their safety by a speedy flight, but all of them resolutely refused to desert or to survive him, their beloved master.

On the following morning, he mounted his charger, his sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, his generous band of martyrs numbered only thirty two horse and forty foot, but their flanks and rear were secured by their



tent ropes and by a trench filled by them with burning faggots.

The enemy advanced with reluctance and one of their chiefs deserted with thirty of his followers to claim the partnership of inevitable death. In every close or hand to hand onset the despair of the devoted was invincible; but the surrounding multitude galled them, from a distance, with showers of arrows, and horses and men were successively slain. A truce was then allowed for the hour of prayer, after which the combat was renewed and at length terminated by the slaughter of the remaining few of Hossein's companions.

Alone, weary and surrounded by his enemies, the son of Ali seated himself at the door of his tent, and while swallowing a drop or two of water was stricken in the mouth by a dart, his son and nephew, two beautiful youths being killed in his arms. Lifting up his hands and seeing them reeking with the blood of such dear relatives, he repeated a funeral prayer for the living and the dead. In a transport of despair, his sister rushed from the tent and conjured the Cufian general not to allow Hossein to be murdered before her very eyes A

tear trickled down his venerable beard and the boldest of the soldiers fell back on every side, as the dying hero flung himself into the midst of them; but the ruthless Shamar, a name for ever to be execrated by the faithful, reproaching them with cowardice they attacked the grandson of Mohammed with renewed and relentless fury and he fell lifeless among them, pierced with thirty three strokes of swords and lances. After trampling upon the body of their victim, they cut off and carried the head to the castle of Kufa where the inhuman Obedullah struck the mouth with a cane. "Alas," exclaimed an aged man, who witnessed the cowardly act, "Alas! that I should ever have lived to see such an outrage inflicted upon the lips in which I have so often seen those of the apostle of God"

Of Hossein it may be said that he was as clearly distinguished by the qualities of resignation and mental tranquillity, as that of courage had ennobled the founders of his house. The lamentations of his sister were loud and frequent. "Would to God," exclaimed she, at the same time, weeping bitterly, "would to God that I had died yesterday rather than•

have lived until this day. My mother Fatima is dead and my father Ali and my brother Hasam. Alas for the desolation that is passed, and the dregs thereof that remain !”

“ Dear sister,” replied Hossein, “ put your trust in God and know that every thing shall perish save the presence of that God Who created all things, and Who by His Almighty power shall cause them to return unto Him above My father Ali and my brother Hasam were better than I, and in the Apostle of God we, all of us, have an example proposed for our imitation.”

Hossein was, naturally, of a dark and melancholy disposition, as if he had some presentiment of his untimely end. He was, like his father, remarkable for his piety ; his biographers say that he paid his adorations to the Most High a thousand times every day. He once asked his father if he loved him. Ali replied, that he loved him tenderly. Again he asked “ Dost thou love God ?” Ali answered in the affirmative. Upon this Hossein said “ Two true affections cannot subsist together in the same heart ” Ali was so moved by these words, that he burst into tears. Hossein, to

comfort him, continued, "Whether would you rather be guilty of infidelity, or witness my death?" Ali replied "I would sooner deliver up my beloved son unto death than abandon the faith" "Then," rejoined Hossein, "by this test you may see that your love for me is only natural affection, but that you love God with the true love of the inmost soul"

A magnificent mosque was erected over the place where the body of Hossein was interred, which place is named *Meschad Hossein* (the place of Hossein's Martyrdom), and it is to this day, a favorite resort of pilgrims

The descendants of Ali, though, for ever excluded from the universal Caliphate have, in all ages of Islam enjoyed the veneration of the faithful In every Mohammedan country they have, occasionally, filled the throne, as well as the various offices and conditions of life from the prince to the beggar have been ennobled by members of the family of Mohammed In Arabia, they are called *Scheriffs* or *Seids*; in Syria and Turkey, *Emirs*, in Africa, Persia and India, *Syeds*, and when it is considered that, according to Mohammedan law, it is sufficient for the ratification of a claim to this

honourable distinction that either the father or the mother of such and such a person should be of the family of Mohammed, it will not be a matter of surprise that the Prophet's descendants should abound in every quarter of the Moslem world.

Inasmuch as it would not only be an injustice to so illustrious a memory as is that of Ali, but also a disappointment to the reader were we to confine our notice of him to the merely incidental one already given in these pages, we shall close this essay with the following further particulars of him. As to his personal appearance he is said to have been of the middle height, but robust and endowed with prodigious strength of muscle. His beard was black and bushy ; his countenance florid and beaming with intelligence and benignity might be depended upon as a sure index to his disposition. He was equally celebrated for his eloquence and valour while his surname of "The Lion of God" sufficiently attests his prowess and renown of which one, out of many instances, is that at the siege of Khaibar, in 628 A. D. Abubeker and Omar having twice planted the standard on the breach and been twice repulsed, Moham-

med said to them, "tomorrow I shall confide the standard to the hands of valiant truth, the friend of Allah and of the apostle whom He loves." The next day, the standard being intrusted to the hands of Ali, he rushed with it to the breach whence he returned victorious. This and many other of his exploits, form favorite episodes in the work of Arabian and Persian poets and are frequently chaunted in places of public resort to the infinite delight of crowds of attentive listeners. Thus, in describing his appearance before Khaibar, a poet says, "The shield which from the hero's arm was a portion of a cloud beside the sun" Again "From beneath his shield did Ali draw forth Zulficar (the famous sword sent to him by God) which flashed as doth the lightning from a dark cloud beneath the sun, and as the axe severeth the green branches of some stately tree, so did Ali's glaive descend upon the heads of wretched infidels."

Ali possessed great military talents but no political skill. Speaking of their contest, Moawiyah said, "Two things gave me the advantage, my rival was of an open disposition, I was inscrutable, Ali commanded undisciplined troops, mine obeyed the slightest signal." •

If Alī be considered, therefore, with respect to his courage, his moderation and his intelligence, he will be found to have been one of the greatest men to whom Arabia ever gave birth. All Moslem writers speak in the most enthusiastic terms of his corporeal, mental and moral endowments. Thus Abulfedah says, "In Ali we find the example of a brave and worthy prince, a prince than whom a better is not to be found throughout the Mohammedan world and who may, not unjustly, be compared with the philosopher and emperor Marcus Antonius, but who fell a victim to adverse fortune and to the hatred of an ambitious woman (Ayesha) aided by perjury and the hands of assassins.

But Alī deserves also a distinguished place in literary history, in as much as he had cultivated his mind with a care and assiduity unusual in his age and country. He left many collections of sentences, proverbs and poetical pieces. Gohns and Lette published fragments of these sentences, the former at Leyden in 1629 and the latter in 1746, at the end of Ben Zaben's poem. Vather published Gohns's fragments, in French in 1660. Ockley, in the

third edition of his "History of the Saracens" has given an English translation of one hundred and sixtynine of Ali's sentences\* and Nasmuth, in his Arabic Grammar says that Tocherning published one hundred of his proverbs Guadugmiolo was the first who published his poems accompanied by a Latin translation, Rome 1642; but Knepper edited a more correct edition, Leyden, 1745 in 8vo. This contains six small poems, the first of which

\* The following may serve as specimens of Ali's aphorisms —

Knowledge is the ornament of the wealthy and the riches of the poor.

Truth is the conformity of speech to the end for which God intended it.

Perfection consists in three things—patience under affliction, moderation in our pursuits and charity towards the needy.

Religion is a tree, of which faith is the root, the fear of God the branches, and modesty the fruit

The diligence of the world is idleness, its grandeur vileness, and its height lowness

A deceiver's tongue is sweet, but his heart is bitter.

Folly is an incurable disease

He is the most just of men who doth justice upon himself, without his being adjudged by others



had been given by Golins at the end of Eupensius's Grammar, Leyden, 1616 ; and the second, third and fourth poems by Agafato in his Arabic Grammar, Rome 1687. A treatise also by Ali upon the magical sciences is said to be still preserved in the imperial Library at Constantinople.—Such, my readers, was Ali ! *May he for ever repose on the bosom of the Eternal Beatitude !!!*

*FINIS*







